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NYC BRIEFING

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MIKOYAN TRIP TO UNITED STATES

- I. Yesterday Soviets asked our Embassy in Moscow for visa for A. I. Mikoyan (Senior Presidium Member and First Deputy Chairman of Council of Ministers).
 - A. Mikoyan coming to US as "guest" of Soviet Ambassador to Washington Menshikov. Plans to come at beginning of January for about two weeks.
- II. This move represents another Soviet attempt to establish high-level contact with US.
 - A. Have expected ploy of some kind since negotiations for summit conference broke down earlier this year.
 - B. However, timing of request and method of approach itself suggest some urgency on Soviet part.
 1. Mikoyan will be absent from Moscow during critical period of preparation for Twenty-first Party Congress (opens 27 January).
- III. Mikoyan will almost certainly seek talks with US officials on increasing trade with US, but we doubt this is his real purpose. For that, however, can only speculate.
 - A. Most likely explanation: Khrushchev may be sending Mikoyan to probe US intentions on Berlin and broader related issues.

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B. May also be an attempt to arouse suspicions in Western Europe that secret bilateral US-Soviet negotiations actually taking place.

1. Soviet agents have been planting this story in Europe.
2. Object would be to weaken NATO solidarity in Berlin situation, bring other Western countries to negotiate directly with Moscow.

C. We can probably also expect another pitch for a summit conference.

IV. Although these motives, or combination of them, seem most likely, we do not completely exclude possibility that Mikoyan's trip related in some way to Soviet internal politics.

A. Cannot be more specific, but wish to convey some sense of uneasiness about recent events in USSR which we do not fully understand. Besides Mikoyan's trip itself these include:

1. Removal of General Serov, and delay in appointment of his successor.
2. Publication of Khrushchev's speech to the Soviet Party Central Committee while its present meeting is under way.
3. The violent attack in his speech on the "anti-party" group and the absence of expected new proposals for Soviet agriculture.

3. However, must end by emphasising that such evidence as we have points to continued domination of Soviet political scene by Khrushchev.

MIKOYAN, Anastas Ivanovich

Economic specialist Anastas Mikoyan is one of two first deputy premiers serving under Khrushchev. He is the senior member of the CPSU central committee in length of service, and has been a full member of the Politburo (now Presidium) since 1934. A deputy premier since 1937 and first deputy since 1955, he is the Kremlin's leading authority on foreign trade and is probably the brains behind the Soviet economic offensive against the West and the effort to increase consumers' goods production at home.

Trained for the priesthood in his native Armenia, Mikoyan joined the Party in 1915 and was a full central committee member by 1923. He has held a succession of cabinet posts since 1926, including those for foreign and domestic trade, supplies, and food industry. He visited the United States in the 'thirties to study food production methods. He applied the mass canning and packing techniques he learned here to supplying the Red Army during World War II, when he was responsible for the procurement of food and fuel for the military.

After the war, Mikoyan may have played a major role in formulating the early (1945-46) Soviet reparations program in Germany. Since then he has been a principal figure in negotiations with countries the USSR has tried to woo and has been perhaps the most active of the current leadership in the pursuit of trade and good-will in non-bloc countries.

At 63, Mikoyan is as remarkable for his political durability as for his economic acumen. He has survived every major political upheaval since the Civil War by dint of his facility for joining the winning side without having appeared to belong to any other faction. His native charm, humor, and innate love of horse-trading make Mikoyan one of the most able Soviet negotiators. He is open and friendly with foreigners, and seems less interested in Communist ideology than in bolstering Soviet economic strength.